

CINEMA

Brewster's Millions

Directed by Walter Hill; screenplay by Herschel Weingrod and Timothy Harris; based on the novel by George Barr McCutcheon; with Richard Pryor, John Candy, Lonette McKee, Stephen Collins.

Can a man find wealth, fame and happiness by spending \$30 million in 30 days? Can Richard Pryor and John Candy keep us in stitches for some hundred minutes of movie? Can Walter Hill make as much with *Brewster's Millions* as the fictional Monty Brewster has to spend in the film?

I can posit an answer to the last question, a qualified probable yes. Qualified because *Brewster's Millions* has everything it needs to be a successful comedy in the summer movie market—big stars, glossy production values and jokes hamfistedly hammered home. There's nothing much interesting or challenging to the picture, but it does provide some smiles and a few innocuous laughs.

Richard Pryor stars as the washed up minor league pitcher Monty Brewster, a down and out guy who is the last living relative of eccentric multi-millionaire Rupert T. Horn (a hilarious Hume Cronyn in a cameo appearance). There's a catch, though (there's always a catch); to get the full inheritance he has to spend \$30 million in 30 days without telling anyone why. If he fails he don't get squat, but if he comes out of the 30 days with nothing but the shirt on his back, he gets \$300 million.

Luckily Monty has his best friend, catcher Spike Nolan (John Candy), to help him along. Spike is the true blue sort of guy who can't understand his friend's spendthrift ways but sticks by him the whole way through. The



John Candy and Richard Pryor in *Brewster's Millions*.

friendship is supposed to be the center of the film, but it is slighted in the script; what little we see is really created by Candy and Pryor making something out of the slim material.

Walter Hill bends over backwards trying to make this a "sweet" little film but the material just isn't there. Screenwriters Herschel Weingrod and Timothy Harris, the team who wrote *Trading Places*, have filled the film with some good lines and elaborate gags but no real underlying warmth. Much of the film is funny—some of the gags are side-splitting—but overall the picture is weak. Credit is due the cast, especially Pryor and Candy, for making the film as enjoyable as it is. Though they have nowhere the rapport Nolte and Murphy found in Hill's earlier *48 Hours*, they are fine, funny performers able to bring out the best in the film.

Unfortunately this isn't Hill's territory. Material like this belongs in the hands of comedy's schlockmeister of overindulgence John Landis. Though the produc-

tion looks handsome under Hill's direction, the jokes get hammered too hard. The biggest laugh of the film, a clever stamp gag, is a good example. As the joke is set up you can see where it's going by the second or third step if you're paying attention. Most people catch on far before the payoff, but Hill insists on playing it out until the joke is spelled out in capital letters. This is the type of gag Landis loves; under Hill the same sequence goes flat.

Hill's best work is in the action and suspense genres; there just isn't anything for him to do here. Better he and Landis traded projects this year. Hill could have turned Landis' disappointing *Into the Night* into a gritty, tight piece and Landis could have taken the expenses of *Brewster's Millions* and really shown the world how to spend \$30 million—literally. Under Hill, though, the film is too sedate, too weak. But most audiences shouldn't mind this summer. They don't want satisfying films, they want funny ones.

—Sean Axmaker

Review:

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NOW SHOWING

Beverly Hills Cop: Shows with *Police Academy II* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Brewster's Millions: Richard Pryor is a baseball player who is bequeathed \$30 million on the condition that he spend it all in 30 days. McDonald (344-4343).

Birdy: Childhood friends Birdy and Al return from Vietnam with their respective emotional and physical scars. Based on the novel by William Wharton, this is a story of psychological mystery and broken dreams. Matthew Modine (*Vision Quest*, *Mrs. Soffel*) plays Birdy, a pathetic vet who thinks he can fly. Nicholas Cage (*Shoot the Moon*, *Rumble Fish*) plays his friend Al, whose love and devotion help Birdy face a difficult reality. A long film. Eerie music by Peter Gabriel. Directed by Alan Parker (*Midnight Express*, *Fame*, *Shoot the Moon*). At the National (344-3431).

Care Bears: West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Code of Silence: Chuck Norris is obliged to kill hundreds of people to avenge his friend's death and save the girl. Those are the breaks. Shows with *Terminator* at West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Desperately Seeking Susan: A good girl-bad girl social satire that offers rock star Madonna as the Manhattan queen of sleaze whose glitter, street-wise lifestyle is coveted by a bored, virginal New Jersey housewife (Rosanna Arquette) who is married to a hot tub king. Someone aptly described this film as a "New Wave Alice in Wonderland." Susan Seidelman directed (her first film was *Smitherens*). Aidan Quinn (*Reckless*) plays the handsome projectionist Dez. Not a heavy message film, just a lot of fun. Mayflower (345-1022).

Fletch: Comedy. Chevy Chase is a newspaper reporter who assumes many and varied disguises to get the story. Cinema World (342-6536).

48 Hours: Shows with *Witness* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun: Not Cindi Lauper. Siskel and Ebert were disappointed. Maybe the whole world doesn't want to continuously relive

their teen years through anorexic girls and boys with a modicum of dance training. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and West 11th Tri (342-4142).

Just One of the Guys: A girl wants to be a football player on an all-boys team. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and Oakway (342-5351).

Ladyhawk: Medieval Romance. Rutger Hauer (the evil replicant in *Blade Runner*) is the dashing swordsman Navarre who suffers from the unrequited love of the fair Isabeau (Michelle Pfeiffer, *Scarface*). John Wood (*Wargames*) is her rejected jealous lover who bestows a curse which transforms Isabeau to a hawk by day and Navarre to a wolf by night. Directed by Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*). Cinema World (342-6536).

Lost in America: Albert Brooks wrote, directed and acted in this funny, Winnebago-Easy Rider comedy about a Yupwardly mobile couple who quit their high-paying L.A. jobs, buy a winnebago with a microwave, and hit the road to "find themselves." Oakway (342-5351).

Nightmare on Elm Street: State-of-the-art horror movie. Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-0973).

Phar Lap: Story of a famous Australian horse who overcame illness and became a symbol of hope for depression-era Australia. Directed by Simon Wincer (*The Man from Snowy River*), with Ron Liebman, Tom Burlinson, Martin Vaughan. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Police Academy II: Shows with *Beverly Hills Cop* at Cinema World (342-6536).

Rambo—First Blood Part II: If you liked *Code of Silence*, you'll love *Rambo*. This film picks up where *First Blood* left off—that is, with Sylvester Stallone in prison for shooting apart a whole town. The government hires Rambo ('cuz he's tough) to go to Vietnam and get proof of POW's. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-0973).

Return of the Soldier: From Rebecca West's 1918 novel. Directed by Alan Bridges. A shell-shocked captain (Alan Bates) has amnesia and has forgotten 20 years of his life. The three women who love him (Julie Christie, Glenda Jackson and

Ann Margaret) consider confronting him with the awful truth or leaving him in his innocently childish and happy state. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Stop Making Sense: Byrneling Down the House with the enigmatic David Byrne and his band of contemp tribals. Directed by Jonathan Demme (*Melvin & Howard*, *Swing Shift*), this is one of the most outrageously entertaining concert films ever made. Bijou (686-2458).

The Terminator: Futuristic saga of a destroyer robotic and the forces of good who attempt to thwart him. Arnold Schwarzenegger is surprisingly exciting as the scary villain. Shows with *Code of Silence*. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

A View to Kill: James Bond (Roger Moore) engages in mortal battle with a psychotic industrialist (Christopher Walken, *Brainstorm*) and Villainess Grace Jones to save Silicon Valley from being captured, blown-up and GASP! tumbled into the ocean. Springfield Quad (726-0973) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Witness: Shows with *48 Hours* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

—S.R.

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